

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 9, 2017
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Zahn, Commissioners Bishop, Lampe, Larrivee, Woosley, Wu

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Chirls

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Dave Berg, Chris Long, Chris Masek, Marina Arakelyan, Transportation Department

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Wallace; Justin Matthews, KPFF Consulting Engineers; Meagan Powers, Concord Engineering

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Zahn who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Bishop, who arrived at 6:34 p.m., Commissioner Larrivee, who arrived at 6:37 p.m., and Commissioner Chirls, who was excused.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Michelle Wannamaker, 4035 149th Avenue SE, said she was pleased to see the proposed Eastgate project improvements and to see how quickly the Commission made it happen. She also thanked the staff for answering questions at the last Commission meeting. With regard to the materials on the transportation levy, she said she was disappointed that a higher percentage of the levy dollars will not be directed toward congestion management in the city as a whole. That is what the great majority of residents expected the levy would provide. It is good to see that some funding will be used for possible congestion management projects in Eastgate in the near term. What is needed in regard to a comprehensive transportation study is an honest, objective report that will allow the Commission and the city to determine the most effective traffic improvements in Eastgate for the long term. It would be in the best interest of Eastgate residents, and everyone impacted by Eastgate traffic, if an independent consultant, preferably one who has never worked with the city before, were to be hired to do the study. Additionally, the Eastgate residents committee should be given veto power on the selection of the consultant.

Ms. Vicky Clark, East King County policy manager for the Cascade Bicycle Club, she the club is excited about the levy as it was presented to voters with bicycle projects as one of the six funding buckets. Voters clearly responded positively to the nature of the levy. The club also appreciates the work done relative to the Bicycle Rapid Implementation Program (BRIP). Levy

funding provides an opportunity to move projects forward.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lampe. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Woosley and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW/APPROVAL – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Transportation Levy Project List for 2017-2018 and Future Commission Involvement

Councilmember Wallace said the transportation levy identified six categories of projects. The staff have done a good job of putting projects into the various categories.

Transportation director Dave Berg reminded the Commissioners that the transportation levy put on the ballot by the Council was intended to reduce the backlog of projects, specifically those in the neighborhoods. The Council focused on six different categories: congestion management projects, intelligent transportation system (ITS) projects, maintenance projects, sidewalk and pathway projects, bike projects, and neighborhood safety projects. The Council did not specify an exact dollar amount for each category, though there were conversations with the Council through the generation of the actual levy in which some guidance was given to staff regarding dollar amounts.

There were conversations with the Council in the summer of 2016 over the dollar amount for the levy that resulted in the decision to increase the levy from \$0.125 to \$0.15 per thousand to generate some \$2 million per year for congestion management projects. Some of the projects will be very expensive, and there was acknowledgement that the funds will need to be used for preliminary design work to better define costs, right-of-way needs, and to make the projects eligible for grant money.

Mr. Berg said there has been much talk about the need for flexibility with regard to the other categories, but there has been a desire voiced about doubling the amount for neighborhood sidewalk projects. At the time the levy was passed, there were 34 such projects that were backlogged; since then, the number of projects has increased. The 34 projects carried a price tag of about \$1 million each, and without the levy it would take 34 years to complete them at the current funding rate. The levy funds will hopefully cut that time in half. As the years roll on, however, there may be compelling arguments to focus on projects in one bucket over another, and that is why some level of flexibility is needed.

Once the levy passed, staff began working to establish some criteria for developing an initial list of projects. The criteria included addressing geographic equity; looking for early wins; identifying synergy between projects; and recognizing the levy will run for 20 years and that it will not be possible to do everything in the first year or two.

Commissioner Bishop said he saw nothing on the list about the overlay program. Mr. Berg said

the overlay program is not part of the levy; it is part of the CIP budgeting process. Funding for the program increases in 2022 and 2023. He added that the city has received a couple of significant grants for the overlay program for the next few years that will free overlay funds earmarked for arterials to be used for residential street overlay projects.

Chair Zahn noted that there remain geographic areas of the city for which there are no projects shown. She asked if that is because staff has not observed any significant needs in those areas, or if the neighborhood have not come forward with suggestions. Mr. Berg said the project list does not include projects on the existing work program. Most of the categories have an existing CIP work program to go with them. There are no neighborhoods in the city that lack identified projects for one or more of the lists.

Councilmember Wallace pointed out that the list shows projects for only the first two years of the 20-year levy. The neighborhoods not addressed in the first two-year cycle could very well be addressed in the next two-year cycle.

Mr. Berg said at the time the list was last discussed with the Commission, there was much concern about congestion in the Eastgate area. Early in the levy, \$2 million has been allocated to congestion projects in the Eastgate area.

The Commission is expected to play a significant role going forward. Staff will specifically seek from the Commission input relative to neighborhood sidewalk/pathway projects, bike projects, ITS projects, and congestion management projects. At any one time there will be a look ahead of two years, which will accommodate planning and design work. Staff intends to come back before the Commission toward the middle to latter part of the year to nail down a process, including public engagement. An annual report on the levy will be produced and it will come before the Commission and the Council. The report will focus on accomplishments and outcomes, and it will involve data collection to determine the effectiveness of the projects. A website will also be developed to showcase the levy.

Councilmember Wallace pointed out that the levy projects are just one component. The existing CIP has projects that fall into the various categories as well. The city continues to work toward receiving the federal TIFIA loan, which will address a very large piece of the puzzle. There are also maintenance projects and other transportation components, and the transit agencies are coming with their improvements relative to light rail and bus rapid transit.

With regard to the BRIP, Mr. Berg said when the Commission sent a CIP recommendation to the Council the focus was on getting the program done in three years at a cost of \$6.5 million. In reality it will take more like six or seven years to fully implement the BRIP at the current allocation rate. The focus is on trying to achieve one north-south and one east-west route through the city in the near term. The need to get people quickly into and out of the downtown has grown as high-tech companies have moved in and their employees are demanding different modes of travel.

Commissioner Woosley asked if during the next CIP process the levy projects will simply get melded into the mix or if the levy revenues will remain separated. Mr. Berg said the intention is to carry forward with a separate line for levy revenues and expenditures as a way of maintaining transparency. There may be times where an existing project that is ranked highly in the general CIP will be combined with a levy project that is on the list for a few years out, moving up the levy project to take advantage of the combination.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the levy funds can be used to stimulate significantly more funding through grants and the like.

Councilmember Wallace commented that while there is a clear need for some flexibility, there are also some rules of the road that will need to be followed, one of which is earmarking \$2 million per year for congestion. The sense at the Council level is that there is comfort with the allocation of dollars to the six funding buckets, so while there may be some deviation, it likely will not be too great. With regard to ITS projects, he noted that it will be up to staff to present a budget to the Council. Currently there is a dedicated stream going to ITS, and the levy funds look to add another half a million annually for capital funds to supplement that effort. That will allow for hiring a transportation technology expert to work on the plan.

Chair Zahn noted that the Commission had discussed the BRIP with an eye on having two north-south and two east-west routes accomplished by 2019. She said the conversation led her to conclude it will be closer to 2022 before that goal is reached, which does not quite mesh with the Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan goals. Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the \$6.5 million discussed by the Commission for the BRIP will go beyond the two routes in each direction. It will not be necessary to spend the full \$6.5 million in order to get the routes.

Mr. Berg agreed that the \$6.5 million goes beyond the two north-south and east-west routes and seeks to fill in more of the system. Creating those connections continues to be a primary focus, especially into and out of the downtown and connecting with regional systems.

Commissioner Wu asked what type of bicycle facilities are being considered. Mr. Berg said the primary focus is on protected bike lanes. Implementation will be through the use of shoulder width or lane narrowing.

Commissioner Lampe pointed out that since the Commission worked on the BRIP, a more aggressive stance has been taken relative to developing the Eastside Rail Corridor. It could be argued that it will make sense for Bellevue to get its facilities in place and tied into the corridor. In any event, the corridor will serve as a north-south conduit.

Commissioner Woosley called attention to the SE 38th Street - I-90 overpass to 154th Avenue SE project and asked for some clarification. Transportation Engineer Chris Masek said the project has nothing to do with the Mountains to Sound Greenway. The project will essentially extend the bike lane that currently ends near the Allen Road U-turn on SE 36th Street through the intersection of 150th Avenue SE, completing a missing link.

Commissioner Wu said she is not a fan of regular striped bike lanes given the safety implications. In creating them, every step should be taken toward avoiding reducing safety standards.

Commissioner Woosley observed that the list includes some north-south route improvements, including 108th Avenue SE from SE 30th Street to Main Street, and also 108th Avenue NE from NE 12th Street to NE 24th Street. He asked if additional improvements are planned to 108th Avenue SE. Mr. Berg said a number of options were defined in the BRIP for 108th Avenue SE. Now that there is money available, the options will need to be sorted out for implementation.

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald addressed the segment between Bellevue Way and Main Street for which an overlay project is planned for 2017. The road will be ground down and

replaced but in a somewhat different format. The northbound bicycle climbing lane component has already been completed from Bellevue Way to the top of the hill, with three or four feet of shoulder added to the stretch to give bicyclists a little more wiggle room. Between Bellevue Way and Main Street there will be more traffic calming measures implemented, including the tightening up of some of the intersections to slow traffic and provide better connections for pedestrians and bicyclists. One of the things talked about relative to the multimodal LOS work was ensuring that the LOS along a corridor is extended across intersections. Improvements are planned for the intersection of Bellevue Way and 108th Avenue SE to provide a bike pocket, and a signal actuated by a detector in the bike pocket.

Chair Zahn asked which project is down for being completed first, and when it will be launched. Mr. Berg said there are a couple of projects being looked at that involve crosswalk safety updates; they are in Northtowne and by Chinook middle school. Those likely will be the first projects out of the gate.

Chair Zahn asked if the high number of projects on the list will challenge the city in regard to staffing. Mr. Berg said there is a clear staffing need to be able to design and implement the projects. He added, however, that the dollar amounts shown include the design and construction costs. Most of the projects will be addressed in-house, though some of the congestion management projects will require consultants.

Commissioner Larrivee asked about the new ITS partnerships and what might be included. Mr. Berg said there have been conversations recently with Lyft about how the city could partner with them to solve either the first mile or the last mile when it comes to getting people to transit from their homes and back home again, or a circulator to get people from major transit hubs to businesses in the area. The ITS dollars could be money the city could bring to the table to pilot a first mile/last mile problem using something like Lyft. Councilmember Wallace said that sort of thing will fall into the job description for the transportation hire currently being sought. One of the difficult things about transportation technology is that there are so many aspects to it, all of which change quickly, making it difficult for the city to know just how it should allocate its funds. By getting the hire on board, a plan can be developed along with direction for the first two or three things that ought to be done. Lyft is certainly one option, but things are still wide open.

Commissioner Lampe said the distribution among the various categories looked good. He agreed with the need to keep some latitude in being able to move funds around as needed. Councilmember Wallace noted that the \$2 million annually earmarked for congestion is largely set in stone. The Council, with encouragement from the Commission and the community, raised the levy higher for that specific purpose. The others are more fluid, but the categories serve as good guideposts.

Commissioner Wu suggested the first mile/last mile issue is the primary reason why transit usage is not greater. She said she favored looking at a pilot program that could address that need, particularly during the East Link construction period.

Commissioner Woosley commented that ridesharing is certainly the way of the future. It only makes sense to increase the number of persons riding in each vehicle on the road. That will, however, require infrastructure for making the connections. Changing from one vehicle to another has always presented a challenge for ridership, but if it could be made as seamless as possible, transit ridership could be improved.

Chair Zahn said she would like to see the city reach out more to partner with the Bellevue School District as it changes the school start times. She said it was her understanding the school district intends to pilot a ridepool for some schools where the bus routes do not currently work well for many families.

Mr. Berg said the authorization ordinance for the levy to incorporate it into the budget will be before the Council in the next few weeks.

Councilmember Wallace said consideration is being given to branding the levy projects by putting out signs identifying them. He thanked Ms. Wannamaker for promoting the Eastgate congestion issue. Her efforts along with others in the Eastgate community have really made a difference. He clarified, however, that there is no such thing as neighborhood veto power in Bellevue. He also thanked the staff for their work in addressing the levy projects and figuring out how they fit into the various buckets.

With regard to the Bellevue Way SE HOV Lane project, Councilmember Wallace asked the Commissioners to keep in mind as the project moves into the budget process that the more expensive it is, the less viable it becomes and the longer it will take to do it.

B. 148th Avenue SE – 150th Avenue SE Eastgate Area Traffic Study

Traffic engineering manager Chris Long said the study came out of the discussions related to the Eastgate Land Use Code amendment that resulted in the Council asking for input about low-cost near-term congestion relief along the 148th Avenue SE corridor. The study area extends from SE 28th Street near Bellevue College to Newport Way. The focus was entirely on the evening peak period and the simulations were done using Synchro and Sim Traffic, which are companion software packages. The study was done using 2016 traffic volumes.

Mr. Long said the study identified three specific improvements. The first improvement would provide a southbound to westbound right-turn lane on 150th Avenue SE at Newport Way. The pocket would be about 600 feet long. The modeling indicates there would be significant improvement for the southbound through and the southbound right-turn movements; the through delay dropped from 108 seconds to 25 seconds.

Commissioner Bishop referred to the six driveways on the west side would need to be reworked. Mr. Masek allowed that some regarding work would be necessary in order to accommodate the widening work and building the sidewalk. The levy funds will allow for taking the design work to the next level where the specific impacts on the driveways can be determined. Through the recent Neighborhood Enhancement Program process, one of the top projects voted in for Eastgate was to provide a walking facility to the six homes given that they currently have no way to walk to bus stops, the school and so forth. As envisioned, the project would provide a full sidewalk in that area, though a pathway would still be needed for the very short term.

The second improvement has several elements: a dual eastbound to southbound right-turn lane from the I-90 off-ramp on SE 37th Street at 150th Avenue SE, a third southbound through lane continuing to SE 38th Street, and a full-block westbound to southbound turn pocket. The project has the added benefit of providing a lane for traffic coming off the freeway headed for the tunnel and on to West Lake Sammamish Parkway, bypassing the queue waiting to get on the freeway.

Commissioner Bishop observed that most of the project area is within WSDOT's limited access space. Mr. Long agreed and said coordinating with the state will be a big part of the effort. He allowed that the trees would need to come out.

Chair Zahn asked if the longer pocket southbound on 148th Avenue SE will require anything more than restriping. Mr. Long explained that there is a raised island at the back edge of the pocket that would need to be removed.

Mr. Long noted that Commissioner Woosley had asked staff to look at future year conditions closer to the project build year. He said while it is unknown what year the funds will be available, staff chose 2020 as a potential build year. Using the travel demand model and the past traffic volumes in the year, a growth of approximately three percent was projected through 2020. The model runs were repeated using that information and the projects were shown to provide outstanding improvements in the corridor with a 40 percent reduction in travel times through the study area.

Mr. Long also noted that the Commission had asked staff to evaluate the benefit of a five-lane cross section for the block of SE 37th Street between 150th Avenue SE and the I-90 eastbound on-ramp, which is what was originally identified in the 2012 Eastgate/I-90 transportation/land use study. Mr. Masek explained that the walkway on the south side would be the same with a four-lane or five-lane option. To accommodate the five-lane option, widening would need to be done to the north because of the alignment of the off-ramp. The option would include the construction of a wall and a barrier, and the addition of a traffic signal for what would become a double left-turn to get off the freeway. The five-lane option would cost about \$1 million more than the four-lane option.

Commissioner Woosley asked how compatible the project will be with the new eastbound auxiliary lane on I-90. Mr. Long said staff believes the project will still be compatible even ten years out. The intent, however, is to model the project in the broader study. Much will depend on how WSDOT envisions future conditions and how much more latent demand can be served through the existing ramp meter. Under current conditions, the on-ramp gets so congested that fewer cars are served than could be served because congestion builds from the merge point all the way back to the ramp.

Mr. Long said the Commission also asked how the possibility of creating some capacity for westbound traffic to get past the queue of cars making a right-turn onto the on-ramp. Mr. Masek explained that from the on-ramp back to the Pizza Hut driveway there is about 175 feet of room to work with. After that there are a large number of driveways to contend with that will prevent using the space effectively for vehicle storage. Experience has shown, however, that blocking of the westbound traffic does not occur nightly. The project is slightly outside the study area and staff intends to do more modeling on it once the WSDOT model is in hand, but staff does not recommend moving the project forward in the near-term.

Commissioner Woosley commented that the city is in the final stages of updating the Eastgate land use plan. At the same time, concerns have been expressed by residents of the area about congestion and how averaging low-volume intersections with high-volume intersections may not accurately represent the experience of most of the traveling public. The boundaries of the larger study were outlined in the first memo and will also be included in the memo for the Council meeting on March 6.

Commissioner Bishop noted that the threshold between LOS E and F is 80 seconds average

vehicle delay, and between LOS D and E the threshold is 60 seconds. He pointed out that Improvement 1.2 includes a lot of approaches that are in the 60 second-plus range, and three that are over 100 seconds. Those approaches are all LOS F even with the project completed. He said he wanted it clear that the proposed projects will not solve the problem, rather that they will only serve to improve conditions.

Chair Zahn agreed with the need to frame the recommendation in a way that will make it clear the projects are about providing some relief rather than solving the problems.

Commissioner Wu asked staff to verify the overall intersection delay at 150th Avenue SE and Newport Way under the future no-build option. Mr. Long stated that the numbers are based on the Sim Traffic model run, but agreed to recheck the numbers.

Mr. Long shared with the Commission a Sim Traffic demonstration video, both with current traffic conditions and the projected future traffic conditions.

Chair Zahn pointed out that the simulation did not show all the cars that illegally clog in the intersection when the light changes. She suggested there may be some things that could be done to achieve better compliance in the intersection in the near term. Mr. Long allowed that the police patrol the intersection periodically. He allowed that there are odd behaviors associated with the queue that sometimes spills out of the right-turn pocket as cars jockey to get into the pocket.

Mr. Long said Improvement 1 will cost \$2.6 million based on the high-level design and cost estimate, including design, right-of-way and construction costs. Improvement 2 will cost about \$2.8 million. Combined, the two projects will provide about 4.8 minutes in travel time savings. If the two projects cannot go forward simultaneously for funding reasons, Improvement 1 would go first.

Chair Zahn commented that with the \$2 million per year for congestion projects, focusing on Improvement 1 first would mean it could be built as quickly as possible. To design the projects concurrently and then wait for funding to be available, it may be well beyond 2020 before the two projects are completed.

Commissioner Bishop said the unanswered question is whether the levy dollars will be used to tee up a bunch of projects and get them ready for grant money, or whether the levy money will be used to actually build projects.

Commissioner Woosley reiterated and disclosed the fact that he represents some property owners in the area. He stated that regardless of the outcome relative to the projects, his compensation for his professional work will not change. He said he has been very pleased with the city process.

Commissioner Larrivee offered his full support for the improvements. He stressed the need to carefully consider the messaging that will go out to the neighborhood. Construction will trigger significant disruptions, and in the end the projects will not fully solve the traffic problems for Eastgate residents.

Commissioner Wu suggested that it will be helpful at community events to show the traffic volume levels. She pointed out that while the levels of delay are high, the actual traffic volumes are relatively minor.

A motion to approve the staff recommendations was made by Commissioner Bishop. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larrivee and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Bellevue Way SE HOV Lane – 112th Avenue SE Y to I-90

Project manager Marina Arakelyan commented that Bellevue Way SE will be impacted by the light rail construction project and the work to expand the South Bellevue park and ride. One portion of the HOV lane between I-90 and the park and ride is set to be constructed by Sound Transit as part of the East Link project. Bellevue continues to grow at an estimated rate of two percent per year and the question is whether or not extending the HOV lane from the park and ride to the Y will provide any additional benefit. The project objective as defined in the CIP is to reduce congestion in the PM peak, to reduce delay in bus travel times, and to improve multimodal access to the park and ride.

Ms. Arakelyan said the public outreach effort involved meeting with community groups and stakeholders. An open house was held in June 2016, the feedback from which was used to refine the design options. The refinements were presented to the Council on January 9 and then at the open house on January 19.

Based on input from the community, the original seven roadway options were narrowed to just two. The “narrow” option involved adding an HOV lane to the inside lane and widening to the west. The option involved a minimum-width planter strip with no shoulder. The “wide” option also included an HOV lane on the inside land but included a wider planter strip to allow for bigger trees and intermittent shoulders.

With regard to the length of the project, Ms. Arakelyan said the first option extended the HOV lane from the park and ride to the Y. The second option continued the HOV lane to and beyond the Y; the third option involved a general purpose lane instead of an HOV lane to the Y intersection; and the fourth option extended the HOV through the Y only on 112th Avenue SE.

Commissioner Bishop observed that under option 3, the portion of the HOV lane between I-90 and the park and ride would still be constructed, leaving a choke point.

Ms. Arakelyan shared with the Commissioners a table that summarized the parameters that came out of the analysis relative to throughput and travel time savings broken down by 2015 existing conditions, 2030 future baseline conditions, and the four options. The chart included annual travel time savings based on assumptions regarding the value of people’s time, which option 4 showing the most benefit.

Using option 4, the Commissioners were shown two options for phasing in the project. The first option involved expanding the HOV lane from the park and ride 320 feet to the north, or essentially just the frontage of the park and ride. The second option continued the HOV lane only up to the Winters House, a distance of some 1700 feet. The phased approach assumes in both instances that at some point in the future the HOV lane will finished all the way to and past the Y on 112th Avenue SE.

Commissioner Bishop asked what the 1700 feet distance was based on. Ms. Meagan Powers with Concord Engineering explained that under average conditions the queue typically backs up to the Winters House. The modeling work looked at the length to optimize where HOV vehicles could get out from the back of the queue and turn into the lane to maximize the

benefit. The model for the future baseline conditions included the increased size of the park and ride and the increased time for the signal phasing to allow vehicles to exit onto Bellevue Way. The model showed that free flow conditions will not exist in the future even past the Y.

Ms. Arakelyan said some 30 to 40 people participated in the online and in-person survey. Seventy percent held that Option 4 was an acceptable length. The wider option was also preferred by the majority of respondents. Fifty-six percent indicated they would prefer to see the project done all at once rather than phased over time. The respondents indicated that if there is to be phasing, the fourth option is preferred. Only four people objected entirely to the project.

Ms. Arakelyan said she would be seeking a recommendation from the Commission on March 9, and that the recommendation would be forwarded to the Council on March 27.

Commissioner Woosley asked how many buses currently serve the portion of Bellevue Way that is the focus of the project, how many there will be after the elimination of the 550 route, and if it is reasonable to expect that there will be 21 buses per hour with 80 people per bus, which the high-funded option proposes. Ms. Powers said the issue has been looked into more since the open house. She said she also spoke with Senior Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz about the Transit Master Plan. The city saw an increase in transit ridership of almost 100 percent between 2004 and 2012. The growth scenario that was used in the Transit Master Plan has been adopted in terms of the corridor assessment, and it includes the Frequent Transit Network. The city did an extensive amount of modeling for the future demand within the region, and the growth scenario for transit is what is necessary to support the level of growth the city is anticipating in the downtown and BelRed corridor. The city worked with the Puget Sound Regional Council relative to the regional transit network assumptions, and did extensive outreach with King County Metro and Sound Transit in terms of service restructures that will happen with light rail. Even with the expansion to 1500 stalls, the demand for the South Bellevue park and ride facility will be three or four times greater than the actual number of stalls. The modeling shows that more than half of all light rail boardings and alightings will come from bus transfers that serve the stations. Having robust transit service on Bellevue Way will be critical to supporting the city's land use vision. Commissioner Woosley agreed but stressed that there are practical realities that may limit the actual service that can reasonably be expected. Ms. Powers said passage of ST3 will bring additional resources for increased transit services. The city is optimistic that King County Metro will continue to improve services and is working hard to make that happen.

Ms. Arakelyan said after 550 ceases operations, there will be more local buses and connections. Ms. Powers said the 550 resource hours will be used to restructure services to serve the neighborhood and tie into the light rail station.

Commissioner Bishop said it was his understanding that Sound Transit intends to take the 550 service hours and put them into their regional express. There is no guarantee that the 550 hours will come back into the city's corridors. He pointed out that in doing the analysis for the Transit Master Plan focus was given to three scenarios: growth, stable and reduced. At the time the thinking was that King County Metro would be reducing. While that has not happened, things have not moved past stable either, and the difference between stable and growth was quite large in terms of dollars put into service. It is quite a reach to assume that the growth will be in place by 2030.

Commissioner Larrivee said he was somewhat suspicious of the results of the survey. The question the people should be asked is what tradeoffs they are willing to accept. It is easy to see why the survey respondents chose the wide option given that it is only \$10 million more, but the question should be framed in terms of what other things could be accomplished with those dollars. If the annual travel time savings is only \$1.4 million per year, it will take a long time to get back the \$40 million project investment. If in fact transit services are reduced, the return will be even less. The project has a significant cost in terms of the total transportation investments, and the question is whether or not it is the right investment. The results from the open house do not adequately inform the decision.

Commissioner Wu said she remembered seeing at the open house a question asked about priorities. Travel time benefits ranked quite low below construction impacts. She said she would like to know more about the traffic benefits and the downstream and upstream impacts. She said she also wanted to see a breakdown of the project costs, particularly the right-of-way impacts. Ms. Arakelyan allowed that the wide option would require acquiring additional right-of-way, but a major contributor to the overall project cost would be the 25 foot tall retaining wall. The wider the roadway, the higher the retaining wall must be, and thus the higher the cost.

Commissioner Woosley noted that currently there is no shoulder running the length of Bellevue Way SE. It would be an improvement to have even a five-foot right-of-way. However, the Commission needs to carefully consider the costs. The wide option costs about 25 percent more. Even the narrow option, which costs about \$10 million less, represents a considerable investment. Sound Transit will break its subarea equity promise and will annually extract some \$27 million from Bellevue to pay for light rail projects outside of the region. The fact that the dollars will be coming from Bellevue will just make funding local projects that much more difficult.

With regard to the Enatai neighborhood association, Commissioner Woosley noted that the board supported the study on the understanding that reducing congestion will make it easier to get in and out of the neighborhoods. The project, if done right, can offer that benefit. It may be a stretch to believe the growth transit assumptions will come to fruition. The medium approach is more likely to occur, which may not actually change the modeling results all that much. It would be better to err on the side of being conservative rather than overstating the benefits and underdelivering.

Commissioner Woosley also pointed out that the section between 108th Avenue SE and 112th Avenue SE currently has two half-length left-turn pockets that fill up during the commute times and back up into the through lanes, which significantly degrades the level of service in the whole area. Consideration should be given to having the additional lane on 112th Avenue SE extend down past the Y, and to creating a full-length left-turn on the Bellevue Way section.

Commissioner Bishop asked how Sound Transit's three lanes tie into I-90. He said he often uses the route and has found that it is in fact the freeway that breaks down Bellevue Way, not the signal at the park and ride entrance and asked if the model run included the connection with the freeway and the freeway operations. Ms. Powers said the model included from north of SE 16th Street to the meter on the on-ramp to I-90. There are two existing southbound lanes, and the Sound Transit package will add the southbound HOV lane that will tie into the HOV on-ramp to I-90. HOV users on Bellevue Way will be able to go all the way to I-90 without getting into a general purpose lane.

Chair Zahn said she regularly rides the bus from the South Bellevue park and ride. She noted that there are a lot of riders who transfer at that location. Hopefully the city will continue to make sure the routes are available so that once the 550 is taken away, the riders who transfer to other buses will have options. Additionally, she said she was struck by the small sampling size involved in the survey, which at most was 40 people. For a project that costs \$40 million, there should be considerably more input. The staff memo refers to “other project stakeholders” without indicating who they are. Transportation dollars are limited in Bellevue even though the total list of projects is quite high. The HOV project has a high price tag and the information available seems inadequate for making a final recommendation by March 9.

Commissioner Lampe concurred. Given the magnitude of the project and the limited resources available, there is much more work that needs to be done to really justify the expenditure. Good questions have been raised about who will actually use Bellevue Way, and the answers to those questions will be important. There are still outstanding questions about access to I-90 and whether or not there will be any changes to the metering.

Commissioner Wu reiterated her call to better understand the modeling assumptions and methodologies.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Bishop asked when the Commission will be briefed in regard to WSDOT’s plans for I-405 access. Mr. McDonald noted that he has previously provided the Commissioners with a link to the Council presentation that addressed the issue. He agreed to approach the Council liaison to see how he wants the Commission to deal with regional projects that technically are within the purview of the Council.

9. NEW BUSINESS - None

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Chris Johnson with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce underscored the requests made by several Commissioners for more information about transit usage assumptions and what effect a low or medium transit usage assumption would have on the 2030 baseline and the resulting travel times. He said he also would like to see the person throughput comparisons for options 3 and 4. The projected value of the different options might change with different transit usage scenarios. It may be time for the city to ask the legislature to declare Bellevue Way SE a state facility, thus making it eligible for state funding. That may be the only way in the long run to get the resources needed to build additional capacity in the corridor.

11. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Woosley invited the Commissioners to attend the next monthly meeting of the Eastside Transportation Association on February 15. The meeting will feature Kim Henry from WSDOT who will talk about the I-405 improvements.

Commissioner Woosley reported that he recently had the opportunity to hear a presentation on Puget Sound Energy’s (PSE) Energize Eastside project. He said PSE is under a federal requirement to come up with a plan to address the demand needs of the region in order to avoid rolling blackouts. Such blackouts could certainly impact Bellevue’s transportation system, especially the signals and ITS systems.

Commissioner Bishop reported that he attended a meeting in which the CEO of Inrix spoke. He said the talk addressed autonomous vehicles and was impressive. The city has plans to send three or four staff members to Inrix's half-day open house on February 14. Inrix, located in Kirkland, is the world's leading traffic data collection and analysis firm.

Chair Zahn noted that earlier in the day she had attended the Leadership Eastside breakfast where the talk was titled Intersections of Transportation, Neighborhoods and Communities. It was interesting to hear people from the community talk about how they would think about needs if they were representing the neighborhoods, and how they would think differently if they were representing transportation needs.

Commissioner Wu said the next meeting of the Wilburton commercial area CAC was set for March 2. At the last meeting the members engaged in a brainstorming session about what is important for the commercial area. Transportation needs were mentioned, and people were excited about the trail corridor, the Grand Connection and East Link. At the next meeting the group will identify common themes.

A motion to extend the meeting by five minutes was made by Commissioner Woosley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lampe and the motion carried unanimously.

12. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. McDonald called attention to two documents in the desk packet, both of which referenced the Open Public Meetings Act. He said a conversation about practices that constitute open public meetings arose recently after an email was distributed to the entire Commission, something which constitutes an open public meeting. While there were no adverse consequences, it highlighted the need to refresh the Commission with respect to communications between each other outside of official meetings.

Mr. McDonald noted that one of the documents addressed generally what groups of people are required to comply with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. The Commission falls into the category of a subagency created by ordinance or legislative act. The other document outlined the responsibilities of the Commission as an agency in need of complying with the Act.

An email exchange constitutes a public meeting, but not all email exchanges are subject to the provision of the Act. For instance, staff can send out to the Commissioners the agenda for an upcoming non-Commission meeting without constituting a public meeting. However, a reply to all in response to the email would. Emails can be sent individually to staff for distribution to the entire Commission.

Mr. McDonald said the city attorney is slated to come to a Commission meeting in June to provide a comprehensive overview of the Open Public Meetings Act and the responsibilities of the staff and Commission.

13. COMMISSION CALENDAR

Mr. McDonald briefly reviewed with the Commission the upcoming agenda items.

14. ADJOURN

Chair Zahn adjourned the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date